

the moments that words don't reach by writerblender

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The girl swallows hard before she speaks again. "Like Papa?"

Billy's heart just about stops in his chest.

[or how billy hargrove befriended a quiet, curled-haired superhero]

the moments that words don't reach

The first time that Billy meets Jane, he's standing in the Wheelers' living room, making more polite conversation with Mrs. Wheeler as he waits for Max.

There had been some sort of geek tournament, according to Max, after their AV club so Billy hadn't had to wait for her to finish up at the school but at Mike's house instead.

He's starting to get impatient (where *is* she?) when he feels a smaller body collide with his in the doorway.

When he looks down, all he's met with is wild curls and wide, curious eyes.

He's never seen this one of Max's friends before - hell, he didn't even know Max hung out with other *girls* - but he doesn't have a long time to reflect on it. Max is in his line of vision in the next second, saying goodbye and thanking Mrs. Wheeler for letting her come over. Max says a short farewell to the other girl and nothing to him as they leave.

The curly-haired girl stares at him until he shuts the door behind him. Billy makes a mental note to ask Max who her new friend is.

He forgets about her before they get home.

...

The next time he meets Jane, the weekly Dungeons and Dragons tournament has moved locations due to the Wheeler's family plans. That's how Billy finds himself seated on the Byers' couch, waiting for Max yet again.

She comes into the room in a storm of red hair and angry eyes. "You're early --!" The words die in her throat when she sees his face and her eyes soften just the slightest. There's a moment of shared silence between them before Max folds her arms over her chest and turns to go back the way she came. For a moment, Billy is worried

that she'll refuse, that he'll have to drag her kicking and screaming out of the house or face Neil's wrath *again* that night. "I'll be ready in a minute," she huffs over her shoulder before she's gone again.

Billy's still seated on the couch, waiting, when the curly-haired girl appears again.

She stares at him with the same curious expression as before. "Eye," she says softly to him.

Billy only stares at her in confusion. "What do you want, kid?"

"Eye," the girl repeats, pointing to her own.

She's no doubtably talking about the black eye he's sporting. He had told Ms. Byers that it had been an injury from a too aggressive basketball game. She didn't seem to believe him as much as the rest of the school had but he certainly wasn't going to waste time convincing her he was fine. He *barely* knew this woman. He wasn't about to confess that it hadn't been another boy's fist that had caused the bruise but his own father's. He knew better than to do something that stupid.

"Yeah. I've got two of them," is Billy's only reply to her.

"No," the girl's face is as exasperated as Billy expects from his answer. If it wouldn't hurt so much, he'd laugh. "Eye," she repeats and lifts her arm to point to his injured one.

Billy flinches away from her touch - the touch of a fucking *kid* - and she immediately pulls her hand back as if he's burned her. He feels bad for the guilty expression that washes over her face but he can't bring himself to linger on it. He's already injured; he doesn't want to make it worse. "Yeah. It's hurt."

She doesn't seem satisfied with his answer, continuing to stare at him with those wide eyes. She looks just like Ms. Byers had when he had knocked at her door. "A bad dude did it to me."

He figures the answer is simple enough that she'll get the point and move on (and *technically*, he's not *lying* to her) when her eyes only widen, this time in fear. "Bad man?" She repeats.

It seems like the only thing this girl can do is repeat herself, Billy thinks as he nods, exasperated. "Yeah. A bad man."

The girl swallows hard before she speaks again. "Like Papa?"

Billy's heart just about stops in his chest.

...

"You told."

Max looks over at him, her brow furrowing in confusion. "Told *what*?" She snaps back at him.

"You told your stupid friends about Neil, didn't you?" He demands, grip tightening on the steering wheel. He can't help the anger that feels bubbling up under his sternum. He's been *trying* ever since the last time he's been at the Byers but this - *this* is something that he can't just brush off. This isn't Max being late after school or demanding he drive her and her new dork friends around. This could get him killed. This could get them *both* killed.

"What?" Max spits out. She sounds so shocked that Billy almost believes her from her tone alone. "No. I... just said you got in a fight. They don't really care about you, Billy."

"Yeah, well if they don't care so much, then how come your friend asked me about my eye?" Billy demands. His knuckles are white. "Why, *Maxine*, would she ask about my eye and then ask me if my dad did it to me?"

There's a beat of silence and it almost suffocates Billy. His chest feels too tight, as if his lungs are too big and desperately trying to make room for themselves. "Huh?" He demands again.

"El asked you that?"

"El?" Billy parrots back at her.

"El -- Jane. We call her 'El'. She asked about your eye?"

"Yeah, sure." If he's being honest, Billy doesn't give a shit about Max's

friends or their names. "Why did she ask about Neil?"

"She wasn't," Max says softly. He doesn't like the sudden change in her voice. "She... I think somebody hurt her before. A bad man."

"Yeah. A bad man." "Like Papa?"

"Somebody's hurting her?" Billy asks. He thinks his lungs are going to burst.

"I don't think any more," Max responds instantly.

"Do you know where she lives?"

"Jane?" Max asks. "No. We've never gone to her house. We usually go to Mike's. Hopper always comes and picks her up."

"She's *Hopper's* kid?" Billy demands.

"Yeah. She calls him 'Dad'."

Fuck, Billy thinks as the two fall silent again.

Of all the fights he'd get into in his life, he never expected he'd have one with a police officer. At least not *this* soon.

...

Billy knows he's way in over his head as soon as he knocks on Hopper's door. He had left the house that night with only a nod from Neil and a confused expression from Max, claiming to have needed to drop off one of Max's friend's backpack that she'd grabbed instead of her own. It was the same excuse that he'd used on Steve when he'd called him, demanding Hopper's address. Steve had been reluctant to give it to him, saying he could do it, but after several *pleases* and enough charm, he'd ended the call with an address and warning to step over the wire, whatever the hell that meant.

Despite the dread pooling in his stomach, he refuses to back out. He's not going to let this poor kid suffer at the hands of this grown man any more. He's not going to let her grow up scared and walking around as if her home is built out of land mines. He won't let this kid

grow up like *him*.

Hopper opens the door, looking disgruntled and tired. "Hargrove? Kid? What the hell are you doing here?"

"Who the hell do you think you are?" Billy demands and Hopper's expression shifts immediately at his tone.

"Kid, I don't know what's going on with you right now but I'm going to need you to calm the hell down," Hopper responds instantly, throwing a nervous glance over his shoulder. *He's probably looking for Jane*, Billy's mind supplies. His hands curl into fists at his sides.

"What makes you think you can beat your kid, huh?" Billy snaps. Hopper's eyes go wide.

"What are you talking about?"

"What am *I* talking about?" Billy mocks, an incredulous laugh spilling past his throat. "I'm talking how you beat your *kid*, Chief."

"What the hell, Hargrove?" Hopper asks again but before Billy can demand anything else, before Billy can swing, a small voice peeps up behind Hopper.

"Eye!"

Both men turn to look at where Jane is standing in her pajamas, smiling at Billy and Hopper. She looks so small and innocent, so *unassuming*, that Billy has to duck his head, his eyes suddenly burning.

"Go back to bed, Jane. Billy and I are just having a talk," Hopper instructs.

"Papa," Jane speaks again, pointing to Billy. "They're hurting him."

They? Before Billy can ask who the hell *they* are, Hopper makes the connection that he's been missing for the past few minutes. "Papa? Is that who you think I am?"

"Who the hell else would you be?" Billy snaps back.

"Kid, I'm took her away from him. I'm *not* hurting her."

"The bad man hurt him too," Jane insists from where's she still standing in the house. For as little as she says, Billy wishes she'd just stop talking.

"Is there something you want to tell me, kid?" Hopper asks, his tone suddenly shifting from defensive to concerned. It's one that Billy's heard plenty of times from teachers and guidance counselors in California.

"No," Billy says, almost too quickly. "I'm sorry for bothering you." Without another thought, Billy turns and races back down Hopper's driveway, ignoring the way he calls after him and getting into his car as quickly as he can. He needs to get away and he needs to do it now.

He makes it halfway home before the nausea overtakes him.

...

When he goes to pick up Max from their next game at the Wheelers' house, Mrs. Wheeler hands him a slip of paper almost immediately. "Jane's father left this for you," she says, offering him a soft smile. "It's their address. He has to work a late shift tonight; he thought you could drop Jane off at their home since it's on your way."

Billy smiles and thanks her despite the panic bubbling in his chest.

...

Before he'd gotten himself into this mess, Jane and Max talking excitedly in his car would have pissed Billy off to no end. But now, it's a welcome distraction from what the rest of the night will entail. However, it can only last for so long.

When he pulls up to their house, Max only raises her eyebrows at him in surprise. "What about Jane?"

"Her house is on the opposite side of town and I promised that I'd have you home by nine. Can't make it there and back before then," Billy explains.

"But -!" Billy cuts her off before Max can continue her protest.

"Look, I promised I'd have you home before nine. So, go, you brat," Billy snaps, turning to look at Max where she and Jane are sandwiched in the passenger seat. Jane turns to look at him, her eyes hard. Max only glares at him for a few seconds before rolling her eyes and opening the door, stepping out. Jane shifts away from Billy as Max slams the door forcefully shut. Billy doesn't miss the way Jane flinches at the noise.

"If you do anything to her..." Max threatens.

The thought alone makes Billy sick but he nods. "Bat to the balls. Got it, Maxine," he spits back, his voice monotone.

"Don't call me that," Max only huffs, crossing her arms over her chest as she turns to make her way up the driveway.

"Hey, Max!" Billy calls before she can get too close to the house. Max turns, her expression annoyed. "Neil's already in a shitty mood so just... lay low, alright? Just tell him I went for a drive."

Max doesn't respond.

...

"Fast."

It's the first word that Jane has spoken since Max left the car. Billy looks over at her for a split second and she grins at him. He's not sure how to respond to any of it.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Billy asks quietly.

"Max says you drive fast. Will you do it for me?" She asks. When Billy looks over at her in shock, she's turned completely to face him, giving him the most guilt-inducing and pleading look she can manage. It almost makes Billy want to laugh, so he settles on a small smile in her direction.

"I don't think that's a good idea," he says, noticing how she deflates out of the corner of his eye. "I can't really afford to get in trouble

with your dad."

"I won't tell," Jane responds instantly, excitement pouring back into her features.

"Maybe next time."

...

Jane stays quiet for the rest of the ride, telling him when to turn and how much farther to go every few minutes. Besides that, the two just sit in the comfortable silence of the hum of his Camaro. When they finally pull up to her house, somewhere deep in the woods, Jane takes his hand.

"Come inside," she says. "Eggos."

Billy looks down at their hands and back up at Jane. His eyes are wide with horror; Jane doesn't let go. Instead, she just squeezes his fingers tighter in hers. "I don't think that's a good idea, Jane. I don't think your dad would like that too much and my dad..."

"Take home," she offers instead, face still hopeful.

"I think it's best if you go inside alone, Jane."

Jane sighs, her smile disappearing from her face. Billy feels guilt tear at his lungs. He knows what disappointment looks like; he's grown up surrounded in it. He practically drowned in it after his mother died.

"Fine," he sighs and Jane's entire demeanor changes in a split second. Her eyes meet his, wild with excitement, and her fingers clutch his again. "Five minutes and I'm out of here, got it?"

"Five minutes," Jane repeats. With that, she's already dragging him out of the car.

...

It's one of the oddest - if not *the* strangest - situations that Billy's ever found himself in. He's standing, watching as Jane rushes around the small kitchen in the cabin to pack him some Eggos for his ride home.

He only stares as she stands on her tiptoes, feeling around the freezer for the box of Eggos. When he asks her if she wants help, her determined look is enough to deter him from asking again. Once she finally has a hand on the box, she somewhat violently rips it open, sloppily pouring a few onto the counter before she scrambles to find tin foil to wrap it all up in.

It's only a few minutes later that she's prepared his snack and handing him the small package, wide smile on her face.

"Thanks, kid," he muses, taking the frozen waffles from her and turning on his heel. While Jane may be sweet, he feels wrong being here. He'd been standing in the doorway only a few days ago, screaming and trying to pick a fight with Hopper that he wasn't ready for. Just a few hours before that, Jane had seen him for only the second time in her life and discovered his deepest, best-kept, and hardest-hidden secret just by looking at him. He wanted to be out of this house as fast as possible.

He's practically out the door, Jane following a few steps behind him, when it happens.

His boot catches on a raised floorboard and he loses his balance, tumbling forward. He manages to catch himself before he hits the floor, grasping at the small table beside the door to stabilize him. While he's managed to stay upright, the stack of books sitting on top of it is not so lucky. He watches in horror as the several books fall towards the ground, seemingly in slow motion. His face, previously burning with embarrassment, pales instantly at the accident. "Fuck, I'm --!"

The apology dies, lodged somewhere in his throat.

The books never hit the ground. Instead, they hover over the ground, suspended in midair. Before Billy can blink to make sure he's not hallucinating, panic fraying at the edges of his mind so badly that he's *seeing* things, he watches as the books themselves start to rise in the air, towards the table. When he turns to look over at Jane, hoping that she's seeing the same thing that he is, he notices that she's staring at the books, her gaze intense. Her right arm is extended in their general direction, moving as they do -- as if *she* were controlling

them.

Once the books are settled on the table, she smiles at him. There's a small trickle of blood coming from her nose; she wipes it with her jacket sleeve as if it's a normal occurrence. "All fixed."

Billy's not sure what to say first. When his brain finally starts to function enough for him to get a grip on the situation, all that comes out is: "You?"

Jane nods at him, smile still on her face.

Billy swallows past the growing lump in his throat. "You know, Jane, I think I *can* stay after all."

...

When Hopper comes home that night, he finds both Jane and Billy Hargrove seated on his couch, watching re-runs of soap operas. Jane is speaking along with the main actress, encouraging Billy to do the same with the other actors.

"Jim!" Jane cries upon seeing him. "Look! Friend!"

Jim meets Billy's gaze and knows something's wrong immediately. He can feel the all-too familiar tug in his gut; the feeling of his intuition telling that something's *off*. Something's happened.

"Chief," Billy says slowly, as Jane resumes her soap opera speech. "You've got a *hell* of a lot of explaining to do."

...

The explanation takes longer than Billy expects. Two hours later, after many promises to keep government secrets (like Jane) a secret, one broken plate after Hopper explained what happened to her when she was younger, several hugs from Jane, and another promise to visit her again soon, Billy finally gets home.

His dad greets him with his fist as soon as he gets the front door shut.

...

That night, once Billy's cleaned most of the blood off his face in the bathroom and retreated into his room, he collapses onto the bed. The past few days have been more than overwhelming and all he wants to do is forget about it in any way he can.

He rolls over, wiping his eyes furiously, when he feels something flatten under his side. He feels around in his jacket pocket, confused, until he pulls out the now squished Eggos from Jane, still in their tin foil packaging.

Billy remembers the way she had looked at him after he'd broken one of Hopper's plates in a state of blind fury -- couldn't understand *how* someone could hurt her, just a kid, a girl barely past thirteen who wasn't *close* to the fuck-up he was; couldn't *believe* someone would hurt her worse than his father hurt him when she'd had done nothing to deserve it like he had -- how she'd rushed over, bending down to help him pick up the pieces. How she'd noticed the expression of his face - a mix between guilt for making her clean up his mess and pity for suffering a fate so similar to his - and how she'd dropped the shards, instead reaching over to hug him quickly and tightly. How, afterwards, she'd smiled that stupid small grin she was always wearing despite everything that had happened to her at him and kept talking along with her show as she helped clean.

He shuts his eyes in attempts to forget and laughs through his tears.

...

At the next Dungeons and Dragons meeting, while he's seated uncomfortably on Mrs. Wheeler's couch with Nancy sending him angry glances from the kitchen every thirty seconds or so, Jane finds him.

"Billy," she says firmly, glaring at him almost as menacingly as Nancy is -- if not *worse*.

"Jane," he counters.

"You didn't visit."

Billy feels guilt begin its familiar crawl up his chest. He can't seem to

stop letting down this little girl; disappointment is one of the few things he's good at, after all. "I got busy. What do you care?"

"Friends don't lie," she snaps back instantly, gaze hardening. Billy's chest constricts.

"I don't really think we're friends, kid."

"Friends," Jane snaps at him firmly and Billy's eyes widen at the authority in her voice. "Tomorrow. Five-one-five."

"Five-one-five?" Billy repeats, face scrunching up in confusion.

"Hey, Jane," Nancy's voice interrupts their conversation, not giving Jane a chance to explain. When Billy looks up, Nancy is already moving towards her, putting a protective arm around her. Jane leans into the touch subconsciously. "Why don't you go hang out with Mike until Hop gets here, yeah? I'll go get Max."

Nancy guides her out of the room, sending Billy a look that could kill over her shoulder.

Billy runs a hand over his face and, with no other choice, considers his options as he waits.

...

"Where are you going?" Max pipes up from where she's sprawled out on the couch. Billy's nearly out the door, keys already in his hand, when her voice stops him before he can get outside. Sneaking out today won't be too difficult -- Susan and Neil are going out to a work party, which should give him a few hours of freedom.

"To visit your weird friend," he snaps back.

That gets Max's attention. "Fuck you, Billy," she snaps in his direction. "That's not funny."

"I'm not kidding."

Max sits up on the couch, expression confused and eyes sharp. "Why are you going to visit Jane?"

"She asked me too. She's the Chief's daughter and I don't really wanna risk pissing him off," Billy responds.

"But-!"

"Jesus, Maxine, I have no fucking clue, alright?"

Max doesn't like that answer at *all*, even if it's not a *total* lie.

...

At five o'clock the next day, Billy knocks on Hopper's door. It swings open almost instantly, Jane's wide and expectant eyes meeting his.

"Not five-one-five," she says before Billy can even say hello.

"Don't know what five-one-five means," Billy replies.

"Five-one-five," Jane repeats once more, pointing to the clock in the corner of the cabin. "It's only..." she pauses, thinking before she speaks. "Five three."

"Do you mean five fifteen?" Billy asks tentatively.

"Yes!" Jane scrambles in reply. "Five fifteen!" She grabs his hand, pulling him inside and shutting the door behind him. "Early is okay. More time to read."

"Read?" Billy spits back at her, staring at her in disbelief as she drags him towards the couch.

"Need practice. Jim's not here. Need friend." She sits down on the couch, opening up a Dr. Seuss book on her lap and looking at him expectantly. He hasn't sat down yet.

"Aren't you... a little old for that?" Billy asks hesitantly. As soon as the words come out of his mouth, he wishes he could swallow them back down. He watches the way Jane's face falls just the slightest, how her fingers nervously play with the pages of the book.

"Papa didn't teach me," she replies softly.

Anger flames in Billy's throat and it's all that takes for him to sit down next to her.

"Yeah, well, Papas can be pretty shitty, huh?" He asks her, cracking a smile in her direction.

At his smile, Jane's returns. "Shitty?" She repeats.

"It means bad," Billy explains. "Just... don't use it around Jim. He won't be happy that I taught you that. It's a... bad word."

"Bad..." Jane pauses, face scrunching in confusion. "Like, shitty?"

Billy can't help but laugh, ruffling her curls as he does so. "Yeah. Like that. I'll tell you what: we get through this book and I'll teach you some more of those words. Deal?"

Jane's eyes light up instantly.

"Deal."

...

The next few weeks pass the same way. A few days during the week, after basketball practice and dropping Max off at home, Billy drives to Hopper's cabin and spends the next few hours reading with Jane and making her dinner that's *not* frozen. To her pleasant surprise, Billy's not a bad cook and she doesn't *hate* everything he makes. It's slow but steady practice. She's started to grow on him more than he'd like to admit; she understands what he's gone through his entire life with just a few glances and words spoken between the two. Of all of Maxine's friends, she's by far the best. He lays low at home, saying that he's headed to a study group for midterms. In his defense, he's not *technically* lying.

Max - and the rest of her friends - are starting to become less of an annoyance to him. In fact, he finds out that she doesn't *hate* riding in the car with him that much anymore, especially after he starts letting her pick the music once a week. Nancy stops sending him murderous glances every chance she gets. Harrington stops getting on his nerves every time he sees him on the court or in the hallway.

Things can only stay good for so long.

...

It starts to fall apart at the Wheeler's house, back where it all started.

He's early - almost an hour *too* early - and standing on the Wheeler's front lawn, waiting for Max to say good-bye to her friends, get her shit together, and get in the car. Tonight hadn't exactly been a good day in the Hargrove household and Billy's face was nothing but evidence. Neil had only stopped beating him to go get Max from the Wheeler's house. He certainly wouldn't come to the house with blood on his hands and he'd never let Susan leave the house without his careful eye to monitor her movements. All he could do was hope that Billy's face wouldn't swell in the amount of time it took to pick up Max and bring her home.

The first person to come visit him, to his dismay, is not Max. It's Jane.

"Billy!" She cries, swinging open the door and running towards him. "Come inside! Play with us!" She grabs his hand before he can stop her, yanking him towards the house.

Billy winces, pain shooting up his shoulder at the jolt of motion. He pulls out of her grip, causing her to spin around, staring at him with those same wide eyes that she'd worn when he met her.

"No, Jane," he hisses. "Not today."

"Billy?" Her voice is quiet. She knows something is wrong. Billy can't bring himself to care; he hurts all over -- why not inside as well?

"Buzz off, kid."

"Billy?" Jane asks again, even quieter this time. Before Billy can respond again, Max thunders out of the house, throwing a soft goodbye over her shoulder towards Jane, and storms towards Billy's car. Billy's never been more thankful for her presence.

"Don't fucking wait up," Billy snaps at Jane and follows Max.

He doesn't look back towards Jane -- not until the Camaro is already out of the driveway. She's crouched on the ground where he stood only moments ago, face contorted in a mixture of emotions. She watches the car as it leaves.

Billy feels her eyes on him the whole drive home.

...

Jim wakes up to Jane shaking him desperately. He's up almost instantly, asking Jane what's wrong and if she's hurt. She's breathing heavily, as if she can't get in enough air, and there are tears in her eyes. Jim figures it's a nightmare; can't find anything wrong with her physically, when Jane holds something out to him.

It's a necklace, with some sort of religious pendant attached to it.

Jim's never seen it before. "What's that supposed to mean, kid?"

"Papa," Jane forces out. "He's hurting him."

"Him? Who's him? Jane? What's going on?" Jim demands, standing up from the couch that he'd fallen asleep on.

"Billy. He's going to kill him."

...

Billy's *sure* that this is it. That his father's hand, closing around his throat, is going to be what finally kills him. If Neil's hand does let up, which Billy's not so sure he will anymore, the sharp, stabbing pain in his side that makes it difficult to breathe even when he can will probably finish him off.

Neil's still screaming at him but, by this point, all he can hear is the pounding of his heart in his ears. It's started to slow since Neil threw him up against the wall, Billy notes, as black spots start to dance in front of his vision.

Just when he's sure his dad will finally go through with it, the door to his room flies open and he falls to the floor. He realizes, slowly, that Neil's pinned up against the wall. Max is crouched near him, saying

words that he still can't properly understand and staring him in horror. He'd tried to protect her from this.

"Hey, kid, you still with me?" The voice is the first one he properly hears from the ground and Billy's gaze turns to see Hopper standing in his room, keeping Neil against the wall. Neil's gaze is still on him and Max squeezes his shoulder gently.

Billy nods weakly and Hopper grins gratefully.

"You're gonna be okay, kid. It's over."

...

A few hours later, Billy finds himself in Hopper's car, on the way back to the cabin. It'd been a long night; both at the hospital and police station, where Max had eventually fallen asleep on his shoulder. Susan had taken her home, telling Billy to come home whenever he felt ready.

He didn't think he'd be ready to set foot in that house ever again.

"Something on your mind, kid?" Hopper asks, finally breaking the silence in the car.

Billy looks up from where his hands are twisted in his lap. "How did you know? About Neil?"

"How do you think?" Hopper asks at the same time his radio crackles to life.

"Jim? Are you there?"

...

The door to the cabin opens before Hopper's even turned off the car. Jane stands in the doorway, silhouette illuminated by the lights from in the cabin. Hopper only shakes his head as she starts towards his car, making Billy laugh softly at the sight.

Hopper gets out first, stopping Jane from opening Billy's door and bending down to speak to her quietly as Billy slowly manages to get

out of the car.

By the time he's on his own two feet, Jane's finished talking to Hopper, rolling her eyes when he isn't looking, and reaches forward, grabbing Billy's hand in hers. The walk back to the cabin is slower than normal with Billy's injuries but Jane doesn't seem to mind. She tells him all about the Dungeons and Dragons tournament he missed in the meantime.

When they're finally inside, Hopper busies himself making a pot of coffee for them and a cup of hot chocolate for Jane. It leaves him and Jane seated on the couch, with old soap re-runs playing softly in the background again.

"How'd you know?" Billy asks her, "That I was hurt?"

Jane holds up his necklace as an answer. "Felt it."

"Where'd you find that?" Billy asks, grasping it tightly in his hand.

Jane lets him have it back, staring at him carefully. "Mike's. In the grass. Fell."

Billy turns to look at Jane, shaking his head in disbelief as his brain tries to wrap itself around the situation currently presented to him.

"What?" Jane asks after a few more beats of silence.

"My mom gave this to me before she died," Billy whispers, eyes fixed on his boots. He doesn't think he can bring himself to look at her just yet. "She told me that as long as I had it, someone would always be watching over me."

For a few minutes, the only sounds that fill the cabin are Hopper's attempts to find clean cups and boil some water for Jane's beverage.

Billy looks at Jane, eventually, eyes wet with tears. "I guess she was right, huh?" He leans forward, ruffling her hair with his free hand as Jane carefully wraps her smaller arms around him in a loose hug.

Billy wraps his arm around her, squeezing her shoulder gently.

"You were looking out for me this whole time."

Author's Note:

everyone on earth gets to stan 1 irredeemable fictional murderboy with a vaguely sad backstory. guess who mine is. oops.

warnings: mentions of physical and emotional child abuse. keep yourselves safe please.

this fic does not mean i condone billy's actions throughout s2. abuse is not an excuse for him to act the way he does. i was just greatly disappointed w/ the way he was written and don't think that you can make a "totally irredeemable villain" and then show him being beat by his father and pretend it doesn't send a shitty message out to abuse survivors... so this is simply fic where he doesn't suck as much. also s/o to everyone on tumblr who gave me the continual support/ideas/billy and jane content i signed up for!!

this is un-beta'd we fucking die like men. i'm aware this is pretty garbage-y but i'm working on a different fic already that's 100000x better so just... take this in the meantime. please.

if you'd like, come talk to me on [tumblr](#)

kudos and comments keep my crops watered and grades up !!